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ABSTRACT

This case study explores the student teaching experience of a Spanish language teacher candidate through her own eyes. It sheds light on how the participants' prior learning experience and beliefs inform her initial practice, how she develops her teaching skills, what contextual factors affect her learning-to-teach process, and the sources from which she draws her knowledge. Multiple data collection instruments were used to generate relevant and rich data to illuminate the research questions. They included open-ended interviews, participant observation, class videotaping, stimulus recall procedures, and lesson plans. Analysis of data revealed that the interplay of factors, such as the background the participant brought with her, added to her level of commitment, An effective mentoring relationship contributed to a productive learning-to-teach experience. A sample of the participant's interview protocol is appended. (Contains 35 references.) (Author/SM)

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LEARNING TO TEACH SPANISH: A CASE STUDY

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This case study explores the student teaching experience of a Spanish language teacher candidate through her own eyes. It sheds some light on how the participant's prior learning experiences and beliefs inform her initial practice, how she develops her teaching skills, what contextual factors affect her learning-to-teach process, and the sources from which she draws her knowledge (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Johnston & Irujo, 2001). Multiple data collection instruments that generated relevant and rich data to illuminate the research questions were used. They included open-ended interviews, participant observation, class videotaping, stimulus recall procedures, and lesson plans. Analysis of the data revealed that the interplay of factors such as the background the participant brought with herself added to her level of commitment and an effective mentoring relationship contributed to a productive learning-to-teach experience.

INTRODUCTION

Very little attention has been paid to understanding how foreign language teachers learn to teach, how they develop their teaching skills, how they link theory and practice, how their prior learning experiences inform their emerging practice, and from which sources they draw their knowledge (Freeman & Richards, 1996; Johnston & Irujo, 2001). It is argued that the preparation of language teachers has been based more on tradition and opinion than on theoretical and/or research-based principles (Bernhardt & Hammadou, 1987; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Schultz, 2000). Calls have been made for a reconceptualization of the field of second language teacher learning and the development of a research agenda that places prospective teachers at the center and focuses on uncovering the issues involved in learning to teach a foreign language (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Schultz, 2000). A more principled approach to preparing language teaches is crucial now that the profession faces the challenges posed by the upcoming Program Standards for Foreign Language Teacher Preparation that delineate " the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to

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be an effective language teacher" (The NCATE Foreign Language Teacher Standards Writing Team, 2001,p.4).

This case study is designed to make a contribution to the nascent body of publications reporting research on language teacher learning. Specifically, it hopes to add to our emerging understanding of what it is involved in learning to teach a foreign language and what underlies this process from the perspective of a Spanish language teacher candidate.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Role of Prior Learning Experiences in Learning to Teach

Several researchers have examined the impact of prior learning experiences on teacher learning (Bailey, Bergthold, Braunstein, Fleischman, Holbrook, Tuman, Waissbluth, & Zambo, 1996; Freeman, 1993; Gutiérrez, 1996; Johnson, 1992, 1994; Moran, 1996; Numrich, 1996). Their findings support the notion that teachers' prior learning experiences are pivotal in shaping teachers' theories, beliefs, and ways of knowing. In some cases, prior learning experiences have more impact on what teacher candidates do in the classroom than what they learned in their education programs. Prospective teachers use previous teachers as models to fashion their own teaching. The findings also point to the pervasive influence of the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). According to this construct, prospective teachers spend approximately thirteen thousand hours in a classroom as students and thus observing teachers. As a result of this continuous exposure to teachers and teaching, they have deeply ingrained beliefs about the teaching and learning process when they enter the teacher education programs. These beliefs act as filters to screen their professional education coursework and are very difficult to change (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992).

Professional Education Programs

The ability of teacher education programs to prepare prospective teachers effectively has been put into question in the last decade. The prevailing trassmisive-oriented approach to teacher education provides prospective teachers with a set of codified knowledge for which they have little use (Kagan, 1992; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, &

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Moon, 1998). Many prospective teachers feel that their professional education programs afford them with abstract and theoretical concepts and little practical knowledge. They are expected to acquire the latter form their cooperating teachers, who ultimately play a fundamental role in prospective teachers' growth (Jacnicke & Samiroden 1991). Johnson (1994) found that the images prospective teachers had of their programs were less

influential than those referring to their previous learning experiences. Prospective teachers' references to their teacher preparation programs usually focused on how they viewed the different theories of second language acquisition and whether or not they were in agreement with them. Johnson's findings suggest that prospective teachers evaluate the appropriateness of second language acquisition theories in the light of their initial teaching experiences and beliefs.

The Student Teaching Experience

During their student teaching experience, many prospective teachers see their images shattered, have to face the problems emerging from their inadequate training, and are greatly concerned with survival. They plan instruction more geared to avoiding misbehavior than to promoting learning and they are more focused on their own teaching behaviors than on student learning (Kagan, 1992). Often the most important initial concern of student teachers is establishing a comfortable classroom environment and developing class management skills (Numrich, 1996). It has also been found that prospective teachers spend a lot of time planning during their student teaching practice. They usually have difficulty sequencing topics. Although they understand the importance of designing instruction that is appropriate both for the subject matter and for the learners, they are able to do so only in a superficial way. Prospective teachers also have difficulties explaining subject matter to their students. Although they might be aware of student individual differences, they are unable to shape instruction and materials to meet these differences at this stage. The student teaching experience offers prospective teachers varied opportunities to develop their pedagogical content knowledge, that is, what teachers need to know about teaching their particular subject matter. Similarly, student teaching also provides opportunities for the development of prospective teachers' pedagogical reasoning skills, which is the ability to translate knowledge into instruction to

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suit the different backgrounds and needs brought by learners (Shulman, 1986; Borko & Livingston,1989).

THE STUDY

The data for this study was drawn from a larger investigation that examined the student teaching experience of three foreign language teacher candidates. The research questions guiding this inquiry are:

What does the participant bring to the student teaching process? What are her beliefs about language teaching and learning? What is her educational biography? How does all this inform her student teaching practice?

How is it like to learn to teach a foreign language? What contextual factors affect the participant's initial practice?

What are the source and the nature of the participant's subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

A qualitative study using the lenses of phenomenology was considered appropriate to capture the lived experiences of the participant as she initiated her journey towards becoming foreign language teacher at a large Midwest high school. Phenomenology is concerned with experiences as they appear in consciousness. The phenomenological-oriented research focuses on the experiences as lived by the participants and on the meanings they attach to them. The underlying assumption is that reality is what participants perceive it to be (Kvale, 1996; Moustakas, 1994). Thus, the purpose and challenge of a phenomenological-oriented study is to render an account of how a person experiences his/her own world from his/her point of view.

Background of the study: Participant and Site

Terry was a white twenty-two year old female and a non-native speaker of Spanish. She was enrolled in the teacher education program at Central University, a large research school located in the Midwest. Her mother was a first-grade teacher and her father worked as civil servant in her town. Terry spent a good deal of time in her

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mother's classroom when growing up, but she never thought she would become a teacher.

The study was conducted at Morrison High School, which serves as Professional Development School (PDS) site for a number of teacher preparation programs from Central University, including the foreign languages methods course in which the participant in this study had been enrolled the semester prior to her student teaching. During the PDS practice, teacher candidates spend thirty hours on site working closely with foreign language faculty at Morrison High School, obtaining in this way first-hand experience in foreign language classrooms and quality guidance from experienced teachers. Teacher candidates complete a number of tasks that include class observation, micro-teaching, student tutoring, grading, material development, and journal writing.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Data collection for this investigation was carried out throughout the eleven-week c student teaching term during the spring of 1999. The combination of the multiple data ollection sources used in this study generated pertinent and rich data to illuminate the research questions outlined above. The data collection sources included: 1) open-ended interviews, 2) participant observation, 3) video-taped lessons, 4) stimulus-recall procedures, and 5) lesson planning handbooks (See Appendix A for a sample of interview questions).

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Data analysis took place both during and after the data collection phase. The early analysis consisted of reading the data to identify themes and writing comments and reflections of my emerging thinking about the data. Formal analysis after the data collection phase followed the procedures outlined by Strauss & Corbin (1990). Guided by the research questions, I closely scrutinized sets of data to identify patterns and subsequently assign labels to the patterns generated, noting reflections and remarks in the margins. In order to reduce the patterns, I grouped them provisionally around concepts and went back to the data to look for instances to confirm or to question the appropriateness of the categories.

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Validity

A number of strategies used in this study contributed to its validity. First, the various data collection techniques used afforded the means for triangulation of sources. Second, sufficient time was spent in the field to ensure the observation of a wide array of events in its full cycle allowing me to document participant's experience in satisfactory detail. In addition to this, clippings from the data were used for supporting claims. Quotes from the participants are essential in phenomenological-oriented studies to allow their voices and perspectives to emerge. Finally, attention was paid to searching for negative instances and alternative explanations.

FINDINGS

The findings of this investigation are presented in case study form, which is organized according to the categories emerging from the data. Case study methodology provides the means for preserving the integrity of the participant's experience and constructing narratives that bring it alive (Yin, 1984). It also provides an in-depth profile of the participant, based on the research questions. In order to reveal the participant's perspectives, her own verbalizations were increasingly employed in the development of the case study.

Educational Biography

The most determinant experience for Terry's discovery of the subject matter and her subsequent choice of career was a trip to Mexico organized by her high school Spanish teacher. It opened the door for experiencing the language and the culture in a naturalistic setting, presenting a unique opportunity for first-hand experience, which was the way people learned best, according to her. Terry took three years of Spanish and

one year of French in high school. She chose to enroll in Spanish initially, "even though the French teacher was nicer and easier" because all her friends did so. Terry was not too impressed with her high school Spanish classes though. The approach was limited to "rote memorization" of "verb forms," "vocabulary" and "phrases." Students were expected to take notes of all the material introduced in class and recite it back the next class. The

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only resource the teacher ever used for instruction was the board. The following excerpt illustrates how Terry recalled her secondary school classes:

> *In high school we had Spanish everyday. You knew exactly that what you had to do was on the board. You would do the activities, and then the next day, you would come back, and you would go over the activities. By the end of the week, you would have a vocabulary quiz and that was it; that was the cycle. (Interview 1, 3/3/99)*

Terry's first trip abroad affected her greatly. Being in contact with the language and the culture in a natural setting enabled her to practice what she had learned in the classroom, rendering her study of the Spanish language meaningful, to the extent that it determined her choice of profession. When asked why she decided to become a foreign language teacher, Terry said:

> *It never occurred to me that this [teaching Spanish] would be something I really wanted to do for the rest of my life, but I went to Mexico for a week during spring break and after I got back, everything sort of started to make sense, and after that I was sure. I like the traveling, I like seeing what I read about, and I guess that's the way it got started. (Interview 1, 3/3/99).*

Language Coursework

Terry remembered having some good teaching assistants and professors for her language courses. However, she found the advanced language courses rather heterogeneous. There were both native and non-native speakers of Spanish enrolled in those courses. According to Terry, classes were suited to the level of the native and most advanced speakers, which left the lower proficiency-level students "clueless." She remarked that she could always follow because her level was "sort of always in the middle" range. Terry also contended that she learned more from the stricter professors, who would focus on accuracy, as opposed to those who had a less structured approach to teaching Spanish.

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Study Abroad

As with her high school experience, Terry's eight-week trip abroad during college proved to be one the most significant experiences in her teacher education program. The immersion setting of the programs required Terry to use Spanish for communication and survival in the every-day basis contributing markedly to the further development of her Spanish language and cultural skills. As she put it: "As far as improving skills to me that [study abroad] was the best. The best thing was being immersed and sort of have no way out." (Interview 1, 3/3/99). Terry also took two courses during her study abroad program. However, she experienced some difficulties with one of them. It was an honors Culture and Civilization class taught by a Uruguayan professor. Terry found it quite demanding because it was above her proficiency level. In contrast, she enjoyed and benefited "much more" from the other course, Art History of Mexico, taught by the local museum curator. He incorporated a lot of the local folktale in the class and had a better "grasp on what [the students] knew and what he wanted [them] to get out the course." In retrospect, Terry wished she would have known better and gone to study abroad for a longer period of time. It was the key to her more confident knowledge of the subject matter. It enhanced her language skills greatly and provided essential cultural background for teaching. Terry also wished that the university would do a better job both at promoting study abroad and enhancing the financial assistance for this type of experience. The following excerpt captures how Terry felt about study abroad:

> *You don't learn anything until you've been to your study abroad because that's where your language increases, you are immersed in it, you learn so much more about culture and how really people act and think. (Interview 6, 7/5/99)*

Education Coursework

Except for the PDS methods course, Terry did not regard her education coursework as significant in any way. She was quite skeptical at the ability of professional education courses to prepare teacher candidates for teaching. In her view, it

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was the field experience itself that mattered the most when learning how to teach. As she stated,

> *They can't prepare you for this [student teaching] no matter what. It's like I wish we would have more experience in the classroom during PDS, but it's hard when you have to come in and out, you don't stay with the same class, but you can't really prepare until you are right there in front of the class and you know what works and what doesn't. (Interview 6, 7/5/99)*

Terry further held that

> *You're not really prepared until you just sort of jump in and do it. No matter how much you read and you think you know, it's totally different until you are right in front of the class. That's all it boils down to. (Interview 4, 8/4/99)*

PDS Methods Course

PDS eased Terry's transition into student teaching. It offered an avenue for laying the foundations of both her pedagogical knowledge and a productive relationship with her would-be cooperating teacher. Nevertheless, Terry was ambivalent about all the classroom observation involved in PDS. On the one hand, she thought "It was good that I got to see something different to what I learned in college and in high school: how to present, just how to run a class" (Interview 3, 24/3/99). On the other hand, Terry opined that "you [didn't] have to sit and observe that much and just sort of waste your time." (Interview 3, 24/3/99). Terry's ideal setup for PDS had method students working with experienced teachers in all aspects of the teaching endeavor. Observation seemed more meaningful to Terry once there was a framework already in place against which she could revise the decision-making and the instructional practices that took place in the classroom. It was only in retrospective that Terry could see value in observation, as the following clip from the data shows:

> *Only now, when I'm done student teaching, I really like observing other classes to see what techniques they use because I'm more familiar with all of these things. Because before, I didn't know what they were doing*

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> *and it didn't really make much difference to me, but afterwards, a lot of things within PDS were probably more productive I think. (Interview 6, 7/5/99).*

Initiation into Student Teaching

"Jumping in," "trial and error," "sink and swim," "pass or fail," " a big leap" were images Terry used to depict her student teaching experience. They capture the finality Terry attached to this phase of her professional development. Consistent with her views that the professional education program could not prepare her for such experience, Terry viewed student teaching as a sort of definite test. It was the only opportunity to "study under the master" and make mistakes:

> *It really is like sink or swim. When you start you have to make up your mind. Are you gonna do this? Are you gonna give it all, or you're just gonna sink? You really have to come in with the mind set that "I'm gonna really give this my all." You do. You have to or else it's just why bother? It's just all or nothing. (Interview 6, 7/5/99).*

Terry and Mrs. Jones: A Collaborative Partnership

Mrs. Jones, the cooperating teacher, played a crucial role in Terry's growth and contributed markedly to her successful transition into teaching by providing a structure appropriate for addressing her developmental needs. Mrs. Jones was well aware that when Terry "was in high school, they didn't do a thing in Spanish class, so she didn't have a very good model as far as trying different ways of doing things" (Mrs. Jones-Interview, 7/4/99). In Terry's words hers "was a systematic kind of guidance." Her cooperating teacher "helped [her] in every step of the way" providing the guidance and room she needed to develop. Mrs. Jones assistance was reflected both during the planning and teaching process. Terry felt fortunate to have Mrs. Jones as her cooperating teacher. She knew "the ropes" and had answers for all her questions. Terry also greatly valued their partnership. The following excerpt evidences the significance that Terry attached to the role of her cooperating teacher in her learning to teach process. When asked to describe her relationship with her cooperating teacher, she said:

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> *It's very good. It's very easygoing and I couldn't have asked for better supervising teacher. The cooperation that we have between each other is just perfect. She is very caring and concerned that, you know, I do my best as much as I'm concerned that I do. We really sit down and we talk about how it went, "How you think it went?" And then, we see if there's any changes that need to be made or maybe things that just need to be fine-tuned a little bit. Like every week, we sort of work on something different, and that really helps me a lot, just to keep things going. It helps me focus too. (Interview 5, 5/5/99)*

Planning Process

Terry and her cooperating teacher planned together. Particularly at the beginning of student teaching, Mrs. Jones mentored Terry very closely because she "had absolutely no experience in lesson planning." Thus, this process truly constituted a "learning experience." During the first phase of the planning stage, Mrs. Jones assisted Terry in the decision making about content, organization and progression. The following excerpt depicts the approach to lesson preparation as related by Terry at the beginning of their partnership:

> *In the beginning, we did everything together, just making sure that I knew how to do things, that's how it went, step by step. "OK, today, you need to do listening activities as well as the book" or the computer lab, or something like that. Because, I mean you don't know, they don't teach you these things in class. It's like forget all that, this is a whole new game and you need to learn these things as you go on, and that's why it took a while to get adjusted. (Interview 5, 5/5/99)*

In posing questions that activated Terry's thinking about the structure and progression of her lesson, Mrs. Jones helped her student teacher develop her pedagogical reasoning skills. As Terry grew more independent in her decision making about content and organization, Mrs. Jones' role became that of a source of ideas and fine-tuner. Terry relied on her heavily because Mrs. Jones "had all these neat ideas for class that would never occur to [her]."

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Teaching process

During Terry's implementation of the lesson, Mrs. Jones acted as a careful observer, assistant, and feedback source. Because Terry taught the same class three times to different groups, Mrs. Jones made sure she observed Terry's first class. The feedback section that ensued allowed Terry to assess her performance and further refine her lesson planning. Mrs. Jones also provided her with the autonomy that she needed for growth. Mrs. Jones' philosophy regarding this issue was very clear; she viewed herself:

> *As a kind of a guide, somewhat, meaning that they can do pretty much whatever they want, if they have ideas and things. If they don't, then I'll step in and help. If they want to try something completely different that will accomplish what needs to be done, that's fine too. So I just provide a place for them to do whatever they need, to try some things they would like to try and teach. If I need to be more of a specific guide, I'll do that for them. (Mrs. Jones-Interview, 7/4/99)*

As Terry's planning and teaching became more routine, Mrs. Jones' presence in the classroom decreased, allowing Terry to claim as much space and ownership of the classroom as she was able to take.

Beliefs about Foreign Language teaching and Learning

Terry's beliefs about learning and teaching languages were forged mostly by practice. Her previous experiences as a language learner and her exposure to foreign language classrooms during PDS were the main sources informing her beliefs about how foreign languages are taught and learned. Terry maintained that people learned languages differently. Some did it through immersion. Others "just had a natural ability to learn a foreign language." For some others, particularly in the classroom context, it involved a lot of rote memorization and hard work. She believed in the value of memorization for laying the foundations of grammar and constant repetition for preventing the loss of the content already learned. In Terry's view, the language learning process was likely to "be boring and slow," but with dedication, hard work, patience, and

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enthusiasm a "whole new world of literature, and history, and culture" would eventually open.

Contrasting with the previous set of beliefs derived mainly from her schooling experiences were her emerging beliefs resulting from both her study abroad experience and her exposure to Morrison foreign language classrooms. Her previous schooling experiences had exposed her to a rather limited range of practices, which emphasized rote memorization of grammar and vocabulary. On the contrary, her exposure to Morrison foreign language classrooms had shown her a wide variety of teaching practices. The main premises of her new set of beliefs were that students learned best through experience and that in the foreign language classroom this was accomplished by incorporating all the senses as well as students' interests. In other words, engaging the five senses and making it relevant to students was the path to learning. As Terry explained:

> *You always have to have a different approach to things because sometimes not every student learns by seeing something visually, for example. Or they don't always understand something from the audiotapes or something. I think you have to use all senses. You have to incorporate their lives and make it relevant to them, as far as a keeping things in perspective, so they can learn. (Interview 2, 16/3/99)*

Variety was crucial for student learning in Terry's emerging conceptions. It was a powerful motivating factor that could intrinsically lead to learning; in other words, variety per se was key for learning. She was also discovering the importance of employing activities geared to facilitating interaction among students. The value Terry placed on an interactive approach rested more on the collaborative effort it represented than on the opportunities it offered for maximizing students' use of the target language. Illustrating these views are the two excerpts below:

> *You have to have variety. You just can't come in, present your grammar, and do the activities and the homework. You really need the variety. I think the more variety you have to keep things*

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> *moving and interesting, the more they are gonna learn and absorb. (Interview 4, 8/4/99)*

Terry further held that

> *Just that you can't go in and lecture. There has to be interaction, hands-on, anything hands-on. I never really realized the importance of group work and I think that's really, really a big factor in foreign languages. Sometimes, a student doesn't have enough confidence to ask the question but when they work in pairs they find that their partners aren't as sure and they aren't either, then they can ask the question and get results. Yeah, it's hard, it's very difficult but it's very rewarding. (Interview 3, 24/3/99)*

A change that Terry perceived in her belief system as a result of her field experience referred to the use of the target language. Terry entered student teaching with the intention of using Spanish constantly in the classroom. However, due to student response, she soon started questioning the viability of this practice. Because learners were not accustomed to a constant target language use in the classroom, it was very difficult for a newcomer, particularly a student teacher, to change this attitude.

Learning How to Represent and Present the Subject matter

The process of learning how to turn subject matter into instruction to present it to students was a laborious one for Terry. As discussed above, none of her prior professional education coursework dealt with this complex dimension of the teaching endeavor. Additionally, because she had no previous effective models to fall back on, she had to rely almost entirely on her cooperating teacher to guide her through this process. For her, knowing the subject matter and presenting it in ways meaningful to the students were two different things. The effective teacher was not necessarily the most cognizant of her/his subject matter but the one able to "present the subject matter well" and "get the point across." Terry found herself investing a sheer amount of time and effort in the thinking involved in representation and presentation. Presenting required

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skills as a mediator between the teaching materials and the learners to make the content meaningful. When asked what the most challenging aspect of teaching a foreign language was, Terry had difficulty clearly articulating her views as the excerpt below shows:

> *I think it's mostly the way to present it, how you present it. It goes back to the communication. I know how it is. I know what's right and what's wrong, but you have to say in a certain way that it makes sense to the students, so they see how you do this. It's like a procedure, you know. Step one, the mood, the ending of the verb to conjugate. You know, you have to say the right words in order for them to make sense. That's hard to do. How do you present this to make it so that they will understand. You can't just say "here is the verb with the forms." It doesn't work like that. You have to present it (...) How to do this? It's taken a while but I feel like I'm doing better with that. (Interview 4, 8/4/99)*

Another difficulty Terry encountered in the preparation for teaching was planning to last for the entire ninety-minute class, particularly at the beginning of student teaching. On occasion, she found herself having to come up with activities on the spot to fill in extra time left at the end of the period. Other than that, Terry reported that she followed her plan closely. She was not confident enough yet to make decisions in action. Terry's explanations of the grammar points were generally clear and accurate. Although sometimes students appeared confused, Terry was able to answer their questions in an acceptable manner.

Developing a Teaching Approach

Terry fashioned her Spanish language teaching approach after her cooperating teacher to a great extent. She considered Mrs. Jones an "excellent teacher," liked her style, and "tried to emulate her a lot," particularly "in the beginning." She found Mrs. Jones' arrangement of the classroom, in a semi-circle, quite appealing and appropriate for foreign language classes. It not only made the classroom "much more like a friendly environment" but it was also "more open for communication." As Mrs. Jones, Terry did not

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"stay in the podium and lecture" but circulated among the learners, monitoring and assisting them. Terry sought to develop an approach that was also consistent with her beliefs. This approach combined the teaching of grammar with an emphasis on repetition and the appeal to students' sensorial systems. She increasingly strove to incorporate tasks that engaged learners' auditory, visual, tactile, and tasting senses. The appeal to the students' senses was particularly apparent in the teaching of culture, an essential dimension of Terry's approach to teaching Spanish. Although Terry made use of the activities provided by the textbook that emphasized cultural factual knowledge, she favored the use of activities that could bring the culture alive to students. As a result, in Terry's classroom, students listened to Spanish language music, ate Mexican recipes prepared by themselves, watched commercially produced and home-made videos about different aspects of the Mexican culture, made piñatas, and went on field-trips to Mexican stores. Her trademark was to play contemporary Spanish language music, which kids seemed to enjoy, while waiting for the bell. Terry also advocated cross-cultural comparisons between the American and target language cultures. Her favored strategy was drawing on her own, or others, personal experiences with the culture. In Terry's words "it makes the world of a difference when you can compare and contrast" both cultures via first-hand accounts or home-made videos from her trips to Mexico. The presence of native Spanish-speaking students in Terry's classroom facilitated considerably her developing approach to teaching culture. They represented a great resource both as language consultants and as culture insiders and informants.

Language Use in the Classroom

Terry entered student teaching with the intent of using the target language increasingly in the classroom. However, she found difficult to follow suit. According to her, it was necessary to use the target language in the classroom "from day one" because if you used "a lot of English from the start, that's what they [students] were gonna want for the rest of the year." This apparently was the case in the classes Terry taught. Students were not exposed to a great deal of Spanish use; therefore, "they just stop[ped] listening" and claimed that they did not understand Terry's input.

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In Terry's classroom the target language was used primarily for modeling and practicing the teaching activities, for giving simple instructions, and for praising students. She also employed Spanish during brief exchanges with the native speakers enrolled in her class. Terry resorted to English for presenting and explaining grammatical points, for giving complex instructions, and for other administrative matters. She estimated that she used the target language approximately 50% percent of the time. The main strategies used by Terry to make her input comprehensible to students were verbal linguistic and included paraphrasing in English, direct translation, and code-switching.

In attempting to depict the strategies she used for making her input comprehensible to learners, Terry explained

> *What I do a lot, it's I'll say the question twice, one time in English, one time in Spanish; and the page numbers, one time in English, one time in Spanish. Open your book one time in Spanish, one time in English. Just so much repetition, over and over. You know, this is what you have to do. (Stimulus recall 1, 9/4/99)*

In Terry's mind, it was the repetition that accomplished the goal of making Spanish comprehensible for learners. She seemed unaware that it could be precisely the technique she was using that prevented learners from making efforts to understand the input. To a lesser extent, Terry made use of visual strategies to support her rendering of meaning. They included making diagrams or drawings on the board, pointing to objects when naming them, and mimicking actions. Terry contended that acting skills helped considerably in the foreign language classroom in the pursuit of making meaning.

Both Terry and Prof. Lensky, her supervisor from the university, viewed the greater use of Spanish language in the classroom as one dimension on which Terry needed to work on more. Consequently, she made incrementing the use of Spanish in the classroom a pressing goal and directed her efforts toward that end. It was necessary to do it even at the expense of learners' understanding. Terry's growing concern with this issue was captured in our fourth interview:

> *You have to speak Spanish with them even if they don't understand. They have to hear it. I mean, that's just the thing.*

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> *That's what I want to do, more target language, more target language. That's the thing I want to work harder on. And that's to me what it's all about, the target language. It's... you have to do this. That's your goal, as far as anything else is concerned. (Interview 4, 8/4/99)*

Terry's firm objective of increasing the use of the target language was put into action. As the end of her student teaching term drew near, she tried to enhance her use of Spanish in the classroom. She attributed learners' growing comprehension skills to their increasing knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structures as well as their being more accustomed to her manner of speaking. Although Terry employed a number of activities aimed at maximizing student talking time, she tended to emphasize the practice of teacher-controlled activities. Instances observed that made allowance for student language use included role-plays, information gathering activities, and pair activities.

Attention to Students

At the beginning of her student teaching experience, Terry viewed herself mainly in the role of subject-matter specialist. However, as the term unfolded, her views were influenced by those of her cooperating teacher, who adhered to a student-centered philosophy. Considerations about the centrality of the students began to emerge in Terry's mind. When asked what was a rewarding aspect of learning to teach, Terry readily replied:

> *When they [students] get excited about something; when they ask questions, that's what I like. And when they come down and they just talk and you learn about them. It's just. . . .They're just great. I mean, I always thought it was kind of the opposite. I didn't really go into teaching because I liked the kids. I sort of liked my content area more, but now I see some of these kids are just fabulous people and that's what it's all about. (Interview 2, 16/3/99)*

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However, getting to know students and addressing their needs was not an easy endeavor for an inexperienced teacher. Pressed by all the exigencies of her student teaching role, Terry found herself drawn in time-consuming preparation tasks that left very little time for anything else. Only when she gained more confidence and experience was she able to shift some of her attention away from her pressing demands and began focusing more on learners. Defining the nature of the relationship she wanted to develop with them became a great concern. Terry did not want to be conceived neither as "friend" nor as a "warden." For her, it was important to gain students' respect and to "get along with them" in order to create a "good working atmosphere" in the classroom. Additionally, Terry was mindful that learning about students' interests and concerns was essential for making the subject-matter content relevant to them. Thus, Terry tried to build rapport with students by showing interest in their lives. She made a routine of always being in the room well before the class started and engaged in informal conversations with students. Similarly, while students were getting ready to leave at the end of the class period, Terry asked them about their plans for the night or the weekend. For Terry building a relationship with students was a two-way endeavor. As a result, it was not unusual to hear her sharing insights about her own life with students. "I talk about like my own personal experiences, the more things I would say, the more open they would become and it really...It helped create a nice atmosphere" (Interview 6, 7/5/99). Toward the end, in reflecting about the evolution of her relationship with students, Terry recognized that it was an important dimension of her development of her teaching persona, but still a work in progress:

> *By the end, it was really working well. I mean I had the lesson plans down; I was teaching. Now, it seems like at the end, I was working on how you get along with these kids day in and day out. It's hard, you know, because you don't want to become their friend; but yet, you're not the warden at the same time. That was something that I really wanted, to make sure that I knew my students, that I knew the things they like, that they are in love, because that's important to them and whenever I can incorporate something that they like into whatever we were doing, that was*

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for the better, I thought. I'm still working on that. (Interview 6, 7/5/99).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Terry moved laboriously through her student teaching phases. As with many student teachers in the teacher learning literature, she found herself overwhelmed with the complexity and the demands of learning to teach and felt utterly unprepared for such an endeavor. With a committed determination and the caring guidance of her cooperating teacher, Terry was able to move forward and experience genuine growth. She left student teaching with a sense of relief of having culminated this painstaking rite of passage but also with satisfaction of having invested herself completely. Most importantly, she left with the understanding that student teaching was just the beginning of a learning process that had only laid the foundations on which she could continue building the blocks of her professional development.

Terry's experiences in naturalistic settings proved the most determinant influences in the development of her subject-matter knowledge. Her first trip abroad as a high school student opened a door that greatly affected her conception of the Spanish language. It rendered meaningful the set of structures memorized in the classroom setting and gave her insights into the world of one of the cultures where the language is spoken. Study abroad enhanced Terry's language skills and cultural knowledge to a greater degree than her language courses could have ever done. Although Terry's command of Spanish was not superior yet, she communicated effectively. She also had a good working knowledge of the Spanish grammar, which was apparent in her ability to explain the structure of the language accurately and clearly to learners. This finding raises questions about the ability of language coursework to provide prospective language teachers with an adequate proficiency level and cultural competence for effective teaching (Lafayette, 1993; Schulz, 2000).

The finding strongly supports the calls for rethinking the traditional model of college language instruction that either places the burden of language acquisition in the first two years or assumes that study abroad will ensure the achievement of the language

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proficiency level required for effective teaching (Huebner, 1995; Lafayette, 1993). What happens then with all the language teacher candidates that cannot or choose not to go to study abroad? The guidelines of the Program Standards for Foreign Language Teaching Preparation, which increase the desired language proficiency level of prospective teachers to Superior, place further pressure on foreign language departments to re-examine both their curricular structure and content and their practices in order to guarantee the development of higher proficiency levels. For Schulz (2000, p. 518) the number of teachers entering the profession with limited language skills and little cultural competence is "the single most important obstacle to effective FL education in the United States."

Terry's professional coursework did not provide her with a significant theoretical background to bring into student teaching. In her view, with the exception of PDS, her professional education was irrelevant and could not prepare her for the realities of the classroom. This lends support to previous findings about the negligible impact of the professional education coursework on the development of prospective teachers (see Johnson, 1994; Kagan, 1992; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). It also underlines the need to reconcptualize language teacher education programs so that they can provide prospective teachers with both the pertinent theoretical underpinnings of the profession and the analytical skills that would enable them to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Freeman & Richards, 1996)). Teacher education programs also need to afford prospective teachers with increasing opportunities to develop their reflective skills so that they can critically examine the beliefs they bring to their education programs in the light of theory and best practices and thus become more self-aware (Richards, 1998).

Terry's indication that the PDS methods course served as a springboard that provided for a smoother transition into student teaching highlights the importance of effective and appropriate PDS or other clinical experiences prior to student teaching. Well-devised field experiences must afford prospective teachers with numerous and varied opportunities to work collaboratively with master teachers and get exposure to best practices well before they have to student teach. Field experiences should also give prospective teachers opportunities to put theory into practice, to acquire knowledge about

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schools and schooling, and to start developing both their own theories and their pedagogical content knowledge (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2002).

Terry viewed student teaching as the crux of her professional teacher preparation and thus assumed her assignment duties with dogged determination. Without access to either a theoretical framework or effective teaching models to inform her teaching, Terry embraced the model provided by her cooperating teacher, who turned out to be the most significant influence in Terry's development of her general and content pedagogical knowledge. Turning subject matter into content for teaching represented one of the most challenging and time-consuming tasks of learning how to teach for Terry. Roskos (1996, p.120) purports that "making a lesson plan marks an important shift from thinking like a student to thinking like a teacher." Mrs. Jones assisted Terry in this learning experience by engaging her in a systematic process that helped her focus on the decision-making required by planning and the thinking behind it. Mrs. Jones also acted as a careful observer of Terry's teaching providing the timely and constructive feedback needed for growth.

The ability of cooperating teachers to profoundly affect the student teaching experience has been addressed by several researchers (see Agee, 1996; Knowles & Cole, 1994; Sudzina, Giebelhaus & Coolican, 1997). Cooperating teachers that both define their roles in terms of their student teachers' developmental needs and are committed to their success become central actors in the learning-to-teach experience. It is the responsibility of language teacher educators to identify effective cooperating teachers and to create and nurture the kind of collaborative partnerships that would ensure truly illuminating and empowering learning experiences for prospective teachers (Johnson, 2002).

Terry's belief system about teaching and learning a foreign language was shaped by experiential practice. Her prior experiences as a learner, her experience at Morrison High School, and the mentoring relationship with her cooperating teacher were the main sources informing her conceptions about teaching. Terry did not view any of her previous teachers as role models after she could fashion her emerging practice and consciously sought to overcome the influence of the apprenticeship of observation in order to build a

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satisfactory image of herself as a teacher. The approach to teaching Spanish that Terry sought to develop was heavily influenced by her cooperating teacher and emphasized learning through the engagement of all senses and making the study of language relevant to students by addressing their interests. She progressively realized the importance of pair work and group work in the foreign language classroom and tried to move away from her initial emphasis on teacher-controlled activities.

Terry also understood the importance of including culture and made use of a myriad of resources available to her to bring alive to her students different aspects related to the Spanish speaking culture. Although Terry believed in using the target language as a vehicle for teaching and communication in the classroom, she found difficult to put this belief into action. Terry exhibited a limited array of strategies for making her input comprehensible and became discouraged when learners claimed they did not understand her. The use of a wide range of linguistic and nonlinguistic strategies for making input meaningful to students is considered necessary to foster a communicative environment in the foreign language classroom and thus a skill prospective language teachers need to develop (Lee & VanPatten, 1995). It is also desirable to have clear parameters that can enable prospective teachers to make informed decisions about appropriate L1/L2 use in the classroom (Macaro, 2001).

Even though there were mismatches between Terry's emerging conceptions of her teaching self and what she was able to accomplish in the classroom, Terry was able to provide a coherent account of her teaching practice and develop a clearer image of the teacher she wanted to become. Bullough (1991) remarks the importance of having clear self-images for growth to occur. According to the author prospective teachers enter the classroom attempting to validate their self-images. As their knowledge of classrooms and learners increase and the right conditions are present, as they were in Terry's case, they start to modify and reconstruct their self-images.

CONCLUSION

This case study took a broad look at the learning-to-teach experience of a Spanish prospective teacher as viewed through her eyes. The highly situated nature of teacher learning should be taken into account when interpreting the findings of this study.

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In other words, the particular contexts and times where learning to teach takes place coupled with the background prospective teachers bring with themselves profoundly shape their learning-to-teach experience (Johnson, 2002). In Terry's case, the interplay of several biographical, personal, cognitive, educational, and contextual factors forged her initiation and socialization into the foreign language teaching profession.

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APPENDIX

Sample of Participant's Interview Protocol

1. What is the source of your ideas about language teaching?
2. How are you developing as a language teacher?
3. What are your strengths as a language teacher?
4. What are your limitations at present?
5. What do you think you need to improve on?
6. Are there any contradictions in your teaching?
7. Tell me a positive teaching experience that you have had?
8. Tell me a negative teaching experience that you have had (Try to come to an understanding about the origins of your thinking about the experience)
9. What is the most difficult idea, position or concept about teaching a foreign language you have encountered so far?
10. What satisfactions do language teaching give you?
11. What is the most valuable thing about language teaching that you have learned so fa
12. Previous ideas or beliefs that have been challenged or changed as a result of your experiences in the school and classroom
13. Previous ideas that have been reinforced as a result of these new field of experienc
14. What are the characteristics of an effective foreign language teacher?
15. How can the technology available at Morrison can be used to facilitate foreign langua learning?
16. What are your concerns about addressing issues of student diversity?
17. How does your continued work (PDS and student teaching) at Morrison has influenc your approach to teaching foreign languages?

Interview questions adapted from the following sources:

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